



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DCA SUSPENDS LICENSES OF THREE PEOPLE AT KERN COUNTY SKILLED NURSING FACILITY

*Action against Registered Nurse, Physician and Pharmacist follows arrest on charges of
drugging patients.*

SACRAMENTO – Agencies within the California Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) have successfully petitioned a Kern County Superior Court judge to suspend the licenses of a Registered Nurse, a physician and a pharmacist accused of elder abuse and assault.

As a result of the PC 23 Orders, granted by Kern County Superior Court Judge Colette Humphrey on February 20, 2009, [Registered Nurse Gwen Hughes](#), [Doctor Hoshang Pormir](#) and [pharmacist Debbi C. Hayes](#) must cease practicing or attempting to practice any activity for which a California Registered Nurse's, medical doctor's or pharmacist's license is required.

The three were arrested February 18 by special agents of the California Department of Justice (DOJ).

“Moving quickly to suspend the licenses of these three individuals was done in the interest of patient safety,” said DCA Director Carrie Lopez. “We determined it was the best course of action to prevent patient harm, pending the resolution of the criminal case against the three.”

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DOJ alleges Gwen Hughes, the former Director of Nursing of the Kern Valley Healthcare District in Lake Isabella, ordered that patients be given high doses of psychotropic medications to make them easier to control, and that she did so for her own convenience and not in the patients' therapeutic interests.

The actions are alleged to have resulted in the deaths of three patients.

"Allegations like this are very troubling," said Ruth Ann Terry, Executive Officer of the Board of Registered Nursing. "Our first priority is consumer protection, which is why we asked for immediate action to suspend Ms. Hughes' license until this matter is resolved."

Debbi Hayes is alleged to have filled the medication requests despite the lack of a valid prescription from a physician.

"The Board of Pharmacy is grateful to judge Humphrey for granting the request to temporarily suspend Ms. Hayes' license," said Virginia Herold, Executive Officer of the Board of Pharmacy. "Consumers need to know that when there is even a remote threat to the safety of consumers, the Board of Pharmacy will take swift action to protect them."

Dr. Hoshang Pormir is alleged to have approved the medications some time after they had been administered, without examining the patients first to determine whether the medications were medically necessary.

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